



April 2003

## Important Health Benefits News for Benefits Administrators

## Upcoming Events

### APR

**April 15 – May 16** ♦ Health Benefits Open Enrollment for all state agencies, colleges and universities

### MAY

**May 1** ♦ Last day to order current 2002 health benefits materials using 2002 materials order forms

**May 23** ♦ Last day to key Open Enrollment changes for all state agencies, colleges and universities

### JUNE

**June 25** ♦ New COVA Care Member Handbooks mailed to Benefits Administrators for distribution to enrolled employees

**June 27** ♦ New COVA Care and Kaiser Permanente ID card distributed to active employees and family members

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# B.A. Bulletin

## Employee Meetings Reach Large Audience

More than 4200 employees and Benefits Administrators statewide participated in health benefits Open Enrollment meetings in March and April. Attendance was enhanced by videoconferences held through the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Community College System.

A total of 821 Benefits Administrators and 3416 employees attended the sessions, which included information on the new COVA Care health plan, Open Enrollment actions and using EmployeeDirect. Many thanks to all who made these meetings possible!

## HIPAA Privacy Questions

Now that HIPAA privacy regulations are in effect, what assistance may Benefits Administrators provide to employees related to their protected health information?

Benefits Administrators may still assist employees with claim and eligibility issues. Requests for assistance can be made by the member, a family member, a personal representative of the member, or a close friend of the member.

The person making the request has to demonstrate some prior or first-hand knowledge of the treatment or claim in question. Examples of this knowledge would be the name of the provider, date of service and copy of the Explanation of Benefits (EOB). The Benefits Administrator does not need written authorization, but the plan should limit the information disclosed to the minimum amount necessary.

## EmployeeDirect Use High During Open Enrollment

♦ Since Open Enrollment began on April 15, EmployeeDirect has handled 72.2 percent of the more than 10,600 total elections made. Employees continue to give us positive feedback on how quick and easy it is to make changes online.

♦ When you send the EmployeeDirect link to employees, be sure that the address is correct: <http://edirect.state.va.us>. Some employees have had difficulty with the site because their agency e-mailed a page rather than a link.

♦ A special Open Enrollment section is located on the front page and Health Benefits page of the DHRM Web site: [www.dhrm.state.va.us/services/health/openenrollment03/toc.htm](http://www.dhrm.state.va.us/services/health/openenrollment03/toc.htm).

## Automatic Pre-Tax Option

As indicated earlier, health insurance premiums will be deducted from all employee salaries on a pre-tax basis beginning July 1. This will be done automatically through the Department of Accounts. No action by Benefits Administrators is necessary. Agency payroll officers will receive a communication shortly.

## Smallpox Vaccine Covered

The smallpox vaccine and complications arising from the vaccine are currently covered under Cost Alliance, and will also be covered under wellness in the new COVA Care plan starting in July. If the vaccine is work-related and complications result, employees should file a claim with Workers' Compensation.